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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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INFORMATION REPORT

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DATE DISTR. 13 June 1951

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1. At a reception for the press given by the Syrian Army at Qunaytra, Syria, during the week of 14 May 1951, 'Abd-al-Latif Yunis, Syrian Deputy from Safita, was asked if his recent statements advocating a pact between Syria and the Soviet Union were prompted by his contacts with the Soviet Legation in Damascus. 1 Yunis replied that he had acted with the knowledge and approval of Khalid al-'Azam, Syrian Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Lt. Col. Adib Shishakli, Chief of Staff of the Syrian Army, in making his public declarations.

25X1X 2. [REDACTED] according to a Syrian deputy, the Syrian Consul General in New York, Rafiq 'Asha, had arrived in Damascus prior to Yunis' statements with a confidential letter from the Syrian delegate to the United Nations, Faris al-Khuri, in which al-Khuri recommended that the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs undertake some "political blackmail" in the form of a proposal for a pact with the Soviet Union before the meeting of the United Nations Security Council to examine the Syro-Israeli dispute. 'Asha, Yunis, and Shishakli subsequently met at the Foreign Ministry to discuss the letter, and Yunis undertook to carry out al-Khuri's suggestion.

25X1X 3. 'Asha told friends in Damascus that the pro-Russian statements of Ma'ruf Bawalibi in Cairo in March 1950 had resulted in a more cordial attitude toward Syrian representatives in Washington on the part of the United States Department of State and he hoped that similar statements by Yunis would cause the Americans to take a more sympathetic attitude toward Syrian interests, in order to prevent a Syrian alignment with the Soviet Union. 'Asha stated that "with the Americans you have to act this way."

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Comment. The Damascus press of 11 May 1951 carried a full report of Yunis' statement in the Syrian Parliament advocating an alliance with the Soviet Union. On 16 May the Damascus newspaper Paradise reported the body of a memorandum submitted by Yunis to members of the Arab League, recommending a general Arab rapprochement with the Soviets. A fairly reliable Damascus source reported that Yunis had met with prominent Syrian Communists including Nasuh al-Ja'fari on 12 May near Damascus and that

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arrangements were being made for Yunis to meet Khalid Bakdash. The same source also reported that Yunis had visited the Soviet Legation in Damascus on four occasions during the week of 7 May.

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